

From Service Members to Storytellers: Veterans & Military Spouses in Marketing

By Hailey Brindamour, ACP

If you are a veteran or military spouse stepping into a marketing career, you have probably been told that telling your story well is important. Storytelling matters, but a strong career transition begins with something even more foundational: an honest look at where you are starting.

Ben Peterson learned this firsthand. The former U.S. Army Captain and recent American Corporate Partners (ACP) alum assumed the move into civilian marketing would be simple. *"I thought I was a million bucks,"* he admits. Although he was qualified for many roles, it was his mentor, a marketing executive with 15 years of experience, who helped him refine his goals and strengthen his job search. Today, Peterson works in a role that blends operations and marketing, allowing him to use his Army experience while building new skills.

Before you market any product or brand, you will market yourself. A mentor can guide you through that process and help you build confidence in your next steps. Here is how you can get started.



Assess Your Starting Point

Even without an obvious background in marketing, you likely already have a toolkit that will help you stand out. Peterson, who worked in air defense artillery and recruiting prior to his civilian career, suggests that less experienced candidates spotlight existing skills that translate well to marketing. *"Veterans tend to have terrific attention to detail,"* explains **Cori Sices**, Global Senior Director at PepsiCo and a three-time ACP mentor. **Brette Ehrenpreis**, a Global Director with Colgate-Palmolive, adds, *"Veterans and Military Spouses have exceptional leadership experience and a disciplined approach to execution."*

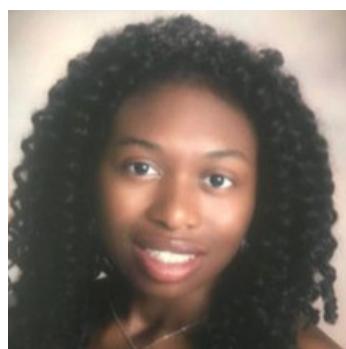
"Don't forget to brush up on your technical knowledge, too." Sices notes that data analytics can be another pathway into marketing, stating that *"knowing how to work with Excel spreadsheets, and convert a table full of numbers into a business recommendation,"* are great skills for someone seeking an entry-level job.

It pays to be flexible, even when you've got the experience. Every industry needs marketers, and you might find opportunities in unexpected places. **Ashlee Milliken**, a U.S. Air Force Spouse and ACP protégé, earned a bachelor's in graphic design and worked in marketing for a local construction

company — an unexpected but welcome fork in the road. *"I realized I enjoyed the construction field,"* says Milliken, who later used this experience to pivot into real estate marketing.

Position Yourself for Success

Whether you're starting with 10 minutes or 10 years of



expertise, there's always room to learn and grow. Ehrenpreis, a four-time ACP mentor, tells all of her protégés to network like it's a second job. She offers practical advice for those who find networking intimidating: ***Start by reaching out to three people and be ready with three questions to fuel the conversation. Make it easy for them to help you — offer available time windows, send the calendar invite, and promptly send a thank you note.***

These conversations won't just boost your job search; they can also help you clarify your longer-term aims.

To help you get there, talk to people in a variety of roles and industries to get a better sense of their day-to-day responsibilities, and consider how well each role aligns with your abilities and interests. RecruitMilitary's online resources can also help you explore different career paths within your chosen field.

Start Your Mentorship Journey

Applying for jobs, interviewing, and networking can all feel intimidating, and working with a dedicated mentor can make all the difference.

"Mentorship creates a safe space to workshop challenges, help to demystify the corporate world, and set achievable goals," says Ehrenpreis. Candidates can use mentorship meetings to explore their skills and unique passions help them stand out to employers.

Joining ACP as an eligible veteran or military spouse protégé is free, easy, and one of the best investments you can make in your future marketing career.

Once you apply, an ACP Associate will work directly with you to find the right mentor, support your career progress, and help you pitch yourself to the world.



Interested in becoming a mentor?

Apply to volunteer just an hour a month and make a meaningful impact.